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**Friends First Matsuri**  
**A Classroom Festival Based on the Japanese Matsuri, Unique Cultural Traditions and**  
**Tatemaie and Honne**

**The Unit:** This activity comes as a culminating activity after students have spent 8 weeks studying Ancient China and Medieval Japan.

**Time Frame:** Ancient and Medieval China Unit: 4 weeks

Ancient and Medieval Japan Unit: 3 Weeks

Friends First Matsuri: Three class periods. In the first period students will learn the elements of Taiko drumming. In the second lesson students will be introduced to the Friends First Matsuri, draw names and meet with their Matsuri Friends. The third period will be the Matsuri Festival itself.

**Prior to this activity:** Students will have studied Ancient China and Confucianism, including the five key relationships and their importance to a harmonious society; feudal Japan including the importance of the feudal hierarchy; the spread of Buddhism and Confucianism to Japan; the indigenous religion of Shinto; concepts of Japanese behavior including tatemaie and honne and the importance of group vs. individual ways of thinking;

Students will also have engaged in unique Japanese cultural traditions such as Shodo, Tanka poetry writing, origami, meditation and more. Throughout the duration of the Japan unit, students are required to practice group behaviors and outer v. inner thoughts. In other words, students are consistently reminded to be nice in thoughts, words and deeds! Students will also have an introduction to Japanese Matsuri and some of the aspects of individual Matsuri as well as to Taiko drumming through videos.

**Purpose and Rationale:** It is often noted in the Junior High School that students treat each in a very cruel manner through bullying and unkind remarks. The concept of the Friend to Friend relationship and the responsibilities that go along with that, the idea that behavior should be good for the group and the concept of inner vs. outer thoughts (tatemaie vs. honne) are unknown to most 7th grade students resulting in intimidation and hurt feelings, not to mention a poor feeling tone in the classroom. The purpose of the Friends First Matsuri is not only to introduce students to additional unique Japanese cultural traditions such as Taiko drumming, Ikebana and gift giving, but also to try to get students to keep negative thoughts to themselves and to put friends first in their dealings with other students. Gift giving usually does not take place at festivals, but for the purposes of our festival, gift giving will be included as a way to have students connect positively with one another and to understand the importance of this tradition in Japan.

Intended Audience: 7th grade World History social studies students

Cross Curricular Opportunities: I will work with the band director on the elements of drumming and Taiko drumming in particular. If possible, I will arrange for him to come into my classroom to give this lesson to the students. I will also work with the Language Arts teacher on the writing of Tanka and Haiku poetry. Haiku is taught in 7th grade Language Arts classes, so this will be an interdisciplinary endeavor.

Materials:

Invitation to the Friends First Matsuri (attached)

Five gallon paint buckets and sticks for Taiko drumming

Instructions on Ikebana and small plastic dishes, florist foam and artificial flowers in three lengths;

Information on Matsuri in general and the Tanabata Festival in particular

Strips of paper for Tanabata Wishes

Information on Furoshiki

A large tree branch for the Tanabata Tree;

Video clips of Taiko Drumming

### **The Activity Itself:**

During the course of the Japanese and Chinese units students will understand the five key relationships of Confucianism and will have discussed them at great length. Students will have practiced behaviors that are good for the group as well as tatemae vs. honne behavior. Students will also understand the concept of gift giving in Japan as it pertains to gift presentation and care and thought in presenting a gift.

About one week prior to the Friends First Festival, students will randomly draw a name of their "friend" for the Matsuri. Students will meet with their "friend" for an informal chat. During the chat, students will try to get to know their friend well enough, that they can anticipate what kind of gift their friend might like to receive. Students will prepare for the festival by finding a gift that their friend will like and wrapping it beautifully. Gifts do not need to be new or expensive. The main point of the gift is that care was taken when choosing it and wrapping it. Students will also bring a snack that their friend will like. A general discussion will also be held as to extending the concept of tatemae and keeping your inner feelings to yourself if the student receives a gift he or she doesn't particularly like--an important aspect of gift reception in American culture also.

On the day of the Festival itself, students will sit in groups of four students, one of whom is their Matsuri friend. In order to invoke a beautiful ambience in the classroom (another Japanese concept), students will have a brief introduction to Ikebana and will then make a centerpiece for their group's table. Students will then play the Taiko drums to provide some music for the festival. Next students will present the gift to their friend, receive their gift in return and share their snack. As a wrap-up students will write Tanabata wishes (having already learned about this festival prior) to hang on the Tanabata tree.

Wishes can be personal in nature but it will be suggested that their wish be something that is good for the group or for their Matsuri friend.

**Assessment:**

Students will be assessed on four things:

1. The care shown in the selection and wrapping of the gift to their friend.
2. Their behavior toward their friend during the Matsuri and evidence that they have put their friend first.
3. Participation in the Ikebana and Taiko drumming
4. A written wrap-up on their reaction to the Matsuri and on whether they think these types of behaviors in our own school would lead to a happier school experience for them personally.

**Long Term Effects:**

It is my hope that the good feelings and civil behaviors will continue as the year progresses. I plan to pay particular attention to the tone in my room and students interactions to see if there are long lasting effects of the Matsuri.

**State of Ohio Academic Content Standards--7th Grade**

**People in Societies**

Students use knowledge of perspectives, practices and products of cultural, ethnic and social groups to analyze the impact of their commonality and diversity within local, national, regional and global settings.

1. Analyze the relationships among cultural practices, products and perspectives of early civilizations.
3. Give examples of contacts among different cultures that led to the changes in belief systems, art, science, technology, language or systems of government.
4. Describe the cultural and scientific legacies of African, Greek, Roman, Chinese, Arab and European civilizations.

**Resources:**

<http://gojapan.about.com/cs/japanesefestivals/a/tanabata.htm>  
[www.matzura.com](http://www.matzura.com)

[http://web-japan.org/atlas/festivals/festi\\_fr.html](http://web-japan.org/atlas/festivals/festi_fr.html)

<http://hubpages.com/hub/art-of-japanese-gift-wrap>

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/dna/h2g2/A571565>

<http://www.thejapanfaq.com/celebrations.html>

<http://www.mynippon.com/RomanceNews0201/story12.htm>

<http://www.flower-arrangement-advisor.com/ikebana-techniques.html>